



# 1999–2000 CATS ASSESSMENT

## Open-Response Item Scoring Worksheet

### Grade 8 – Social Studies

The **academic expectations** addressed by the open-response item “Scales of Justice” are

- 2.14 Students should understand the democratic principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom and apply them to real-life situations.
- 2.15 Students can accurately describe various forms of government and analyze issues that relate to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

The **core content** addressed by this item includes:

- SS-M-1.2.1 The U.S. Constitution separates power among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches to prevent the concentration of political power and to establish a system of checks and balances.
- SS-M-1.3.1 The United States Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and state constitutions guarantee certain rights (e.g., freedom of movement and residence, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and association, personal privacy) for all citizens.

#### Scales of Justice

*Use the illustration below to answer the question.*



“Lady Justice” is a symbol of the United States justice system. As shown in the illustration above, she wears a blindfold and carries a balance scale. Explain how this symbol represents **two** characteristics of the U.S. justice system.



## SCORING GUIDE

### Grade 8 Social Studies

Score	Description
4	Student clearly explains how the symbol represents two characteristics of the U.S. justice system. Response shows a clear understanding of the underlying principles of our system of justice.
3	Student generally explains how the symbol represents two characteristics of the U.S. justice system. Response shows a general understanding of the underlying principles of our system of justice.
2	Student explains in limited terms how the symbol represents two characteristics of the U.S. justice system. <b>OR</b> Student generally explains one characteristic of the U.S. justice system. Response shows a limited understanding of the underlying principles of our system of justice.
1	Student minimally attempts to explain one characteristic of the U.S. justice system. Response shows a minimal understanding of the underlying principles of our system of justice.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

Examples of characteristics of the U.S. justice system symbolized by the blindfold:

- justice is blind, impartial, non-discriminatory
- everyone is entitled to equal justice under the law
- the judicial system treats everyone the same regardless of race, wealth, class, sex, age, national origins, etc.

Examples of characteristics of the U.S. justice system symbolized by the scales:

- judicial decisions are based on a weighing of evidence (facts determine guilt or innocence)
- people have a right to a fair trial and right of appeal
- people have a right to a trial by a jury of peers who will weigh the evidence
- an accused person is considered innocent until proven guilty



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 8 Social Studies

### Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

"Lady Justice" is a symbol of the U.S. justice system. She wears a blindfold and carries a balance scale. This illustration represents 2 major things in our justice system. The blindfold represents that in our court system there will be no biases for one kind of race or religion. The balance scale is supposed to represent that both sides of a case are equal no matter what either side of a case has done. So this means that if a man is accused of killing someone the judge will be fair and assume he is innocent until he is proven guilty. As you can see, this picture is not just a drawing of a lady in a blindfold.

← Student clearly explains how Lady Justice's blindfold represents one characteristic of the U.S. justice system (i.e., there are "no biases for one kind of race or religion").

← Student clearly explains how the balance scale represents another characteristic of the U.S. justice system (i.e., everyone is entitled to equal justice under the law).

Overall, the response shows a solid understanding of the democratic principles of justice that underlie the U.S. justice system. The student clearly explains how different parts of the symbol of "Lady Justice" represent two characteristics of the U.S. justice system.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 8 Social Studies

### Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

Lady Justice wears a blindfold and carries a scale. These are both symbols of the way our court system is designed. She wears a blindfold so that she may not judge how guilty someone is by their looks or condition, and so that emotions such as pity do not interfere. The scale represents the equal opportunity for both sides of the argument. It also stands for assessment and decision making. When you weigh something, you find out which is heavier. When you put someone on trial, you find out who's guilty.

← Student clearly explains how Lady Justice's blindfold represents one characteristic of the U.S. justice system (e.g., people are not judged "by their looks or condition").

← Student clearly explains how the balance scale represents another characteristic of the U.S. justice system (e.g., judicial decisions are based on the assessment or weighing of the evidence).

Overall, the response shows a solid understanding of the democratic principles of justice that underlie the U.S. justice system. The student clearly explains how different parts of the symbol of "Lady Justice" represent two characteristics of the U.S. justice system.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 8 Social Studies

### Sample 3-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

Lady Justice is a statue of a woman wearing a blind fold and holding a balance scale. This statue represents the US justice system in two ways.

First, the blindfold. This means that all people are equal. The court does not see race, gender, or apperence. Everyone's equal. No matter who you are you will get a fair trial. It is your constitutional right.

The second way is her balance scale. This represents the equality of each trial. All trials are done the same, and they are all fair.

This is how Lady Justice represents the US justice system.

← Student clearly explains how the blindfold represents one characteristic of the U.S. justice system (e.g., a “court does not see race, gender, or appearance”).

← Student generally explains how the balance scale represents another characteristic of the U.S. justice system (e.g., “all trials are done the same”).

Overall, the student shows a general understanding of the democratic principles of justice that underlie the U.S. justice system. The student clearly explains how one part of the symbol of “Lady Justice” represents one characteristic of the U.S. justice system and generally explains how another part of the symbol represents a second characteristic of the U.S. justice system.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 8 Social Studies

### Sample 2-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

The illustration represents being innocent until proven guilty with the scale and it also represents having the right to a fair trial with the blindfold.

Being innocent until proven guilty means if you did or did not do a crime you will not be punished with the proper evidence.

Having the right to a fair trial means that the judge can't be paid off by the other person.

Student explains how the symbol's scale and blindfold represent two characteristics of the U.S. justice system, but the explanations are limited (e.g., the right to a fair trial means that "the judge can't be paid off" by another person).

Overall, the student shows some understanding of the democratic principles that underlie the U.S. justice system. The student explains how two parts of the symbol of "Lady Justice" represent two characteristics of the U.S. justice system, but the explanations are limited.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 8 Social Studies

### Sample 1-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

A. One of the way that lady Justice represents one of the characteristics is well maybe the reason she has the blind fold on is because this is saying that the U.S. justice system maybe blind about not knowing how much more justice needs to be spread, but that's why she has the weight thing, because even though they can't see it all they feel that everyone needs to be treated equaly. So maybe that's why she has on a blind fold and is holding the weight thing. I mean if you put a bad guy and a good guy then there going to be equal, but one may weigh just a little more.

← Student attempts to explain how the symbol's blindfold represents one characteristic of the U.S. justice system, but the response is incorrect.

← Student explains how the symbol's scale represents one characteristic of the U.S. justice system, but only one part of the explanation is correct (i.e., "everyone needs to be treated equaly").

Overall, the student shows a minimal understanding of the democratic principles that underlie the U.S. justice system. The student attempts to explain how two parts of the symbol of "Lady Justice" represent two characteristics of the U.S. justice system, but, aside from correctly stating that everyone needs to be treated equally, most of the explanation is incorrect.



# INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

## Grade 8 Social Studies

The open-response item “**Scales of Justice**” was designed to address students’ (1) understanding of the characteristics of the United States justice system, and (2) ability to understand the democratic principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom and to apply them to real-life situation. The instructional strategies below present ideas for helping students explore and master these concepts and skills.

Provide opportunities for students to work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and/or as a class to complete (with teacher guidance and support) any or all of the following activities:

- Create charts on the various branches of government and their powers. Compare the branches and their powers.
- Discuss why “Lady Justice” represents the United States justice system. Research and discuss whether or not this symbol accurately represents our current justice system. Write editorials reflecting student opinions on this issue.
- Write a feature article about a case of interest to the community. The article should describe how the justice system has functioned in this case. Students could also write an editorial taking a stand on a particular legal issue in the case.
- Interview prosecuting and defending attorneys and local judges.
- Read *12 Angry Men* by Reginald Rose and discuss the workings of the justice system in this novel.
- Watch a video (e.g., *12 Angry Men*) and discuss the characteristics of the justice system illustrated in the film.
- Participate in a mock trial simulation based on a well-known case. Students could script their own roles after researching the case.
- Set up a teen court in the school which would, in cooperation with administrators, address minor discipline infractions.